

FRUIT

There are five major fruit and berry crops grow in the Garden State: apples, blueberries, cranberries, peaches and strawberries. Weather conditions were generally good for the fruit and berry crops for the 2001 growing season. The season started early due to a mild winter, but the summer was dry. Some irrigation was necessary during the prolonged dry season despite frequently scattered precipitation throughout the region.

Total production of the five fruit and berry crops during 2001 amounted to 226 million pounds, up 13 percent from 2000's production of 201 million pounds. Fruit value of utilized production totaled \$82.4 million, a gain of almost \$6.43 million from the 2000 total of \$76 million. Value of utilized production was higher for apples, blueberries, cranberries, and peaches, while strawberries was down slightly.

During 2001, among all major fruit and berry producing states in the nation, New Jersey ranked second in blueberry production; third in cranberry production; tied for fourth in peach production; and thirteenth in apple production. Ranking crops by value of production within the state resulted in blueberries first with \$36.7 million. Peaches ranked second with \$28.4 million, while apples ranked third with \$8.12 million. Cranberries and strawberries ranked fourth and fifth with \$7.95 million and \$1.3 million, respectively.

There was no significant winter damage to the apple or peach orchards because of the mild weather conditions. Blueberry and peach pollination was adversely affected by early season low temperatures. Dry conditions during most of the growing season reduced the threat from plant disease. For early harvested peaches, both size and prices were good. The late season peach demand was low due to small fruit size, therefore resulting in low prices.

Apple production was above normal with both quality and prices fair to good. Total apple production was 55 million pounds, 5 million pounds higher than a year ago. Average price, at 16.2 cents per pound, was 2.8 cents per pound higher than a year ago. Gloucester County was the leading apple producing county, accounting for 38 percent of the state's total production. Cumberland County ranked second at 7.8 million pounds and Camden ranked third at 5 million pounds. Burlington and Atlantic were fourth and fifth with 3.6 and 3.5 million pounds, respectively.

Total peach production for 2001 totaled 75 million pounds with 70 million pounds utilized. The 2001 value of New Jersey peach production totaled \$28.4 million, up 15 percent from 2000. Gloucester County was the leading peach growing county in the state with production of 35 million pounds or 47 percent of the total state's production. Cumberland and Camden counties ranked second and third with production of 20 and 5.5 million pounds, respectively.

Cranberry growers in New Jersey produced 566,000 barrels in 2001, an increase of 77,000 barrels from 2000. The value of production was \$7.95 million, up 7 percent from \$7.46 million in 2000. This is the second consecutive year the cranberry industry has been under marketing restrictions under which growers can only sell a percentage of their sales history to the processors.

Due to the marketing restrictions, some growers cut back on inputs or acres to restrict production and cut costs.

The 2001 blueberry total production was estimated at 38 million pounds, up 3 million pounds from 2000. Value of utilized production was \$36.7 million compared to 2000's value of \$36.1 million. Atlantic and Burlington counties are the leading blueberry producing areas. The season average price of 99 cents per pound was down 7 percent from \$1.06 per pound in 2000.

